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FM AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
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INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1534
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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1447
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1474
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STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/11/2016
TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM KISL KDEM TI
SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: IRPT SAYS RAHMONOV WILL USE LIBEL SUIT AS
BARGAINING CHIP

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, Embassy
Dushanbe, U.S. Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Muhiddin Kabiri, the Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) told PolOff April 6 President Rahmonov likely will stop the lawsuit filed by Dushanbe Vodokanal against IRPT Chairman Said Abdullo Nuri closer to the election in November.

¶2. (U) Dushanbe Vodokanal, the Dushanbe water utility company, filed a suit against Nuri accusing him of libel. According to news reports, Behruz Safarov, the director of Dushanbe Vodokanal, accuses Nuri of defaming his company. In an article published in December, Nuri alluded to the company engaging in bribery, but Safarov insists Nuri has no proof. A district court in Dushanbe is reviewing the libel suit.

¶3. (C) Kabiri informed PolOff that Nuri is in Iran seeking medical treatment. Kabiri plans to discuss the suit with him this week either via telephone or in person in Iran to seek Nuri's instructions on next steps. The IRPT is not worried about the suit and dismisses it as frivolous. Kabiri predicts that Rahmonov will, at the last

minute, come in to "save" the IRPT from the suit and have it dismissed prior to the November election. However, this will come at a price. Rahmonov will reportedly use this as a bargaining chip for Nuri to agree that the IRPT will not field a candidate to run against Rahmonov, or perhaps even convince the IRPT publicly and directly to support Rahmonov.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: Given Kabiri's forecast, it is not inconceivable the suit was planned by someone in Rahmonov's administration to give Rahmonov this bargaining power with the IRPT. The IRPT is the only competing party with a real base. That said, it is unlikely that Kabiri, or any other candidate, could effectively challenge Rahmonov.

END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND